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Photo Studios toward the Digital Photographic Era:

The Cases of Three Photographers in Kansai Area, Japan

KyungUhn LEE

From 1840s to 1920s, professional photographers of portrait photo studios were considered as masters of photography. Photography is in great demand as a substitute for portrait-painting. Since the invention of photography, photo studios had a great influence in the diffusion of photography as a medium. And they have also changed themselves with developing of local society.

In the beginning of 21st century, technics of digital photography brought various reformation in photo studios. At that time, professional photographers of portrait photo studios who were in their age of 50s, had to decide whether learning digital photography or quitting their own photo studios.

This essay is to investigate how they have been started photographic carrier, what was their background, and what is the distinguishing trait of this their experience. There are three professional photographers. They were professional photographer's son, and they had the same experience of learning photography at 'Photo studio KUDO' in Osaka in 1960s. Masaru SOWA(1945~) in Osaka(Photo studio NikoNiko), Takao NIWA(1948~) in Hyogo(Photo studio AKEMI) and Yasuji NISHIMINE(1946~) in Wakayama(Free). Then, they mastered digital

photography, and still do their work. Through reviewing these photographers and considering the changes toward digital photographic era in the history of photo studios in Japan, this essay would find some aspects of 'history of photo studios in Japan'.